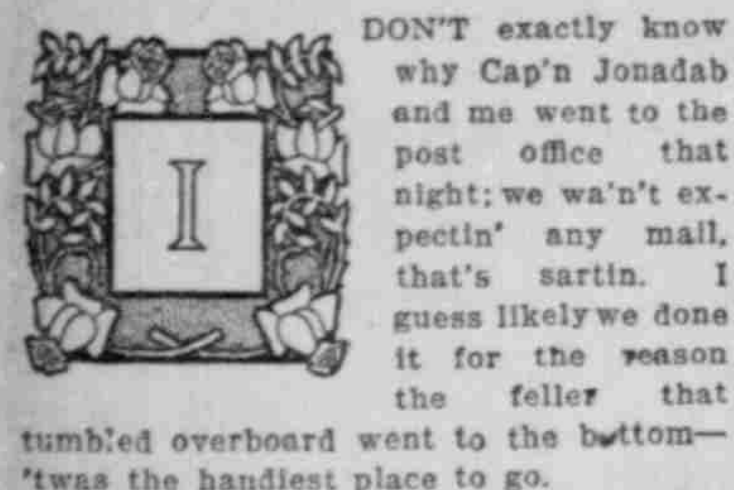


TWO PAIRS OF SHOES

By JOSEPH C. LINCOLN



DON'T exactly know why Cap'n Jonadab and me went to the post office that night; we wa'n't expectin' any mail, that's sartin. I guess likely we done it for the reason the feller that tumbled overboard went to the bottom—'twas the handiest place to go.

Anyway we was there, and I was propin' up the stove with my feet and holdin' down a chair with the rest of me, when Jonadab heaves alongside flyin' distress signals. He had an envelope in his starboard mitten, an' comin' to anchor with a flop in the next chair, sets shiffin' the thing from one hand to the other as if it 'twas red hot.

I watched this performance for a spell, waitin' for him to say somethin', but he didn't, so I hailed, kind of sarcastic, and says: "What you doin'—playin' solitaire? Which hand's ahead?"

He kind of woke up then, and passes the envelope over to me.

"Barzilla," he says, "what in time do you s'pose that is?"

'Twas a queer lookin' envelope, more'n the average length fore and aft, but kind of scant in the beam. There was a puddle of red sealin' wax on the back of it with a "D" in the middle, and up in one corner was a kind of picture thing in colors, with some printin' in a turban language underneath it. I b'lieve 'twas what they call a "coat-of-arms," but it looked more like a patchwork comforter than it did like any coat ever I see. The envelope was addressed to "Captain Jonadab Wixon, Orham, Mass."

I took my turn at twistin' the thing around, and then I hands back to Jonadab.

"I pass," I says. "Where'd you get it?"

"'Twas in my box," says he. "Must have come in to-night's mail."

I didn't know the mail was sorted, but when he says that I got up and went over and unlocked my box, jest to show that I hadn't forgot how, and I swan to man if there wa'n't another envelope, jest like Jonadab's, except that 'twas addressed to "Barzilla Wingeat."

"Humph!" says I, comin' back to the stove; "you ain't the only one that's heard from the Prince of Wales. Look here!"

He was the most surprised man, but one, on the Cape; I was the one. We couldn't make head nor tail of the business, and set there comparin' the envelopes, and wonderin' who on earth had sent 'em. Pretty soon "Tly" Tucker heads over towards our moorin's, and says he: "What's the trouble? The ancient mariners?" he says.

"Barzilla and me's got a couple of letters," says Cap'n Jonadab; "and we was wonderin' who they was from."

Tucker leaned away down—he's always sufferin' from a rush of funniness to the face—and he whispers, awful solemn. "For Heaven's sake, whatever you do, don't open 'em. You might find out."

Then he threw off his main-batch and "haw-hawed" like a loon.

To tell you the truth, we hadn't thought of openin' 'em—not yet—so that was kind of one on us, as you might say. But Jonadab ain't so slow but he can catch up with a hearse if the horse stop to drink, and he comes back quick.

"Tly," he says, lookin' troubled, "you ought to sew red-points on your mouth. 'Tain't safe to open the whole of it on a windy night like this. Fust thing you know you'll carry away the top of your head."

Well, we felt considerable better after that—havin' held our own on the tack, so to speak—and we walked out of the post office and up to my room in the Travlers' Rest, where we could be alone. Then we opened our envelopes, slick and smooth as a mackrel's back, and inside of that was a letter, printed, but lookin' like the kind of writin' that used to be in the copybook at school. It said that Ebenezer Dillaway begged the honor of our presence at the marriage of his daughter, Belle, to Peter Theodosius Brown, at Willamend House, Cashmere-on-the-Hudson, February three, nineteen hundred and so forth.

We were surprised of course, and pleased in one way, but in another we wa'n't real tickled to death. You see, 'twas a good while sence Jonadab and me had been to a wedding, and we knew there'd be mostly young folks there and a good many big-bugs, we presumed likely, and 'twas gittin' to cost considerable to get rigged-up to mention the price of passage, and one thing a nother. But Ebenezer had took the trouble to write us, and so we felt 'twas our duty not to disappoint him, and especially Peter, who had done so much for us, managin' the Old Home House at Wellmouth Port.

I've told you already how the Old Home House come to be started, and how Peter T. Brown dropped in from nowhere and made such a howlin' success of the thing, and how he got engaged to the star boarder, Ebenezer Dillaway's daughter—Dillaway of the Consolidated Cash Stores.

Well, we see 'twas our duty to go, so we went. I had a new Sunday cut-away and light pants to go with it, so I figured that I was pretty well found, but Cap'n Jonadab had to pry himself loose from considerable money, and every cent hurt as it 'twas nailed on. Then he had chilblains that winter, and all the way over in the Fall River boat he was fumin' about them chilblains, and addin' up on a piece of paper how much cash he'd spent.

We struck Cashmere-on-the-Hudson about three o'clock on the afternoon of the day of the wedding. 'Twas a little country kind of a town, smaller by a good deal than Orham, and so we cal'lated that 'haps, after all, the affair wouldn't be so everlastin' tony. But when we were in sight of Dillamend—Ebenezer's place—we shortened sail and pretty nigh drew out

of the race. 'Twas up on a high bank over the river, and the house itself was bigger than four Old Homes spliced together. It had a fair-sized township around it in the shape of land, with a high stone wall for trimmin' on the edges. There was trees, and places for flower-beds in summer, and the land knows what. We see right off that this was the real Cashmere-on-the-Hudson; the village folks were stranded on the flats—old Dillaway filled the whole ship channel.

"Well," I says to Jonadab, "it looks to me as if we was gittin' out of soundin's. What do you say to comin' about and makin' a quick run for Orham again?"

But he wouldn't hear of it. "S'pose I've spent all that money on duds for nuthin'," he says. "No, sir, by thunder! I ain't scared of Peter Brown, nor her that's goin' to be his wife; and I ain't scared of Ebenezer neither; no matter if he does live in the Manufacturers' Buildin', with two or three thousand fathom of front fence," he says.

Some years ago Jonadab got reckless and went on a cut-rate excursion to the World's Fair out in Chicago, and ever sence then he's been comparin' things with the "Manufacturers' Buildin'" or the "Palace of Agriculture" or "Streets of Cairo," or some other outlandish place.

"All right," says I. "Darn the torpedoes! Keep her as she is! You can fire when ready, Gridley!"

So we set sail for what we judged was Ebenezer's front gate, and, jest as we made it, a man comes whistlin' round the bend in the path, and I'm blessed if 'twas'n't Peter T. Brown. He was rigged to kill, as usual, only more so.

"Hello, Peter!" I says. "Here we be."

If ever a feller was surprised, Brown was that feller. He looked like he'd struck a rock where there was deep water on the chart.

"Well, I'll be—," he begun, and then stopped. "What in the—," he commenced again, and again his wind died out. Finally he says: "Is this you, or had I better quit and try another pipe?"

We told him 'twas us, and it seemed to me that he wa'n't nigh so tickled as he'd ought to have been. When he found we'd come to the wedding 'count of Ebenezer sendin' us word, he didn't say nothin' for a minute or so.

"Of course, we had to come," says Jonadab. "We felt 'twouldn't be right to disappoint Mr. Dillaway."

Peter kind of twisted his mouth. "That's so," he says. "It'll be worth more'n a box of diamonds to him. Do him more good than 'finin' a 'don't worry club.' Well, come on up to the house and ease his mind."

So we done it, and Ebenezer acted even more surprised than Peter.

I can't tell you anything about that house, nor the fixin's in it; it beat me a mile—that house did. We had a room somewhere up on the hurricane deck, with brass bunks and plush carpets and crocheted curtains and electric lights. I swan there was lookin' glasses in every corner—big ones, man's size. I remember Cap'n Jonadab hollerin' to me that night when we was gittin' ready to turn in:

"For the land's sake, Barzilla!" says he, "turn out them lights, will y? I ain't over'n above bashful, but them lookin' glasses makes me feel's if I was undressin' along with all hands and the cook."

The house was full of comp'ny, and more kept comin' all the time. Swells! don't talk! We felt 'bout as much at home as a cow in a dory, but we was there 'cause Ebenezer had asked us to be there, so we kept on the course and didn't signal for help. Travelin' through the rooms downstairs where the folks was, was a good deal like dodgin' ice-bergs up on the Banks, but one or two noticed us enough to tip the co's, and one was real sociable. He was a kind of slow-spoken city feller, dressed as if his clothes was poured over him hot and then left to cool. His last name had a splice in the middle of it—'twas Cateby-Stuart. Everybody—that is, most everybody—called him "Phil."

Well, sir, Phil cottoned to Jonadab and me right away. He'd git us, one on each wing, and go through that house asking questions. He pumped me and Jonadab dry about how we came to be there, and told us morn yarns than a few 'bout Billaway, and how rich he was. I remember he said that he only wished he had the keys to the cellar so he could show us the money-bins. Said Ebenezer was so jest-well, rotten with money, as you might say, that he kept it in bins down cellar, same as poor folks kept coal—gold in one bin, silver half-dollars in another, quarters in another, and so on. When he needed any, he'd say to a servant: "James, fetch me up a box of change." This was only one of the fish yarns he told. They sounded kind of scaly to Jonadab and me, but if we hinted at such a thing, he'd pull himself together and say: "Fact, I assure you," in a way to freeze your vitals. He seemed like such a good feller that he didn't mind his tellin' a few big ones; we'd know good fellers afore that liked to lie—gunthers and such like, they were mostly.

"Somehow or nother Phil got Cap'n Jonadab talkin' 'boat,'" and when Jonadab talks 'boat' there ain't no stoppin' him. He's the smartest feller in a cat-boat that ever handled a tiller, and he's more races than any man on the Cape, I cal'late. Phil asked him and me if we'd ever sailed on an ice boat, and when we said we hadn't he asks if we wa'n't take a sail with him on the river next mornin'. We didn't want to put him to so much trouble on our account, but he said: "Not at all. Pleasure'll be all mine. I assure you." Well, 'twas his by a spell—but never mind that now.

He introduced us to quite a lot of the comp'ny—men mostly. He'd see a school of 'em in a corner, or under a palm tree or somewhere, and steer us over in that

direction and make us known to all hands. Then he'd begin to show us off, so to speak, git Jonadab tellin' 'bout the boats he'd sailed, or somethin' like it—and them fellers would laugh and holler, but Phil's face wouldn't shake out a reef; he looked solemn as a funeral all the time. Jonadab and me begun to think we was makin' a great hit. Well, we was, but not the way we thought. I remember one of the gang gits Phil to one side after a talk like this and whispers to him, laughin' like fun. Phil says to him: "My dear boy, I've been to thousands of these things—'wavin' his flipper scornful around the premises—'and upon honor they've all been alike. Now that I've discovered somethin' positively original, let me enjoy myself. The entertainment by the Heavenly Twins is only begun."

I didn't know what he meant then; I do now.

The marryin' was done about 8 o'clock, and done with all the trimmin's. All hands manned the yards in the best parlor, and Peter and Belle was hitched. Then they went away in a swell turnout—not like the derelict hacks we'd seen stranded by the Cashmere depot—and Jonadab pretty nigh took the driver's

hazard ear off with a shoe Phil gave him to heave after 'em.

After the wedding the folks was settin' round the palms and bushes that was growin' in tubs all over the house, and the stewards—there was enough of 'em to man a four-master—was carlin' round punch and frozen victuals. Everybody was toggled up till Jonadab and me, in

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"Now, then," says he, "we'll take a little jaunt up the river. 'Course, this ain't like one of your Cape Cod cats, but still—"

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It struck us—I don't think any got away. I expected every minute to land in the hereafter, and it got so that the prospect looked kind of invitin', it only to git somewhere where 'twas warm. That February wind went in at the top of my stiff hat and whizzed out through

'round. I began to git shaky at the knees, as if I was preachin' to a big congregation.

After a spell Jonadab, not bein' able to think of anything more to say, and rememberin' Phil's orders, leans over and whoops into the trumpet.

"I'm real glad your son done so well with his laundry," he says.

Well, sir, Phil had give us to understand that them congratulations would make a hit, and they done it. The women 'round the room turned red and some of 'em covered their mouths with their handkerchiefs. The men looked glad and set up and took notice. Ebenezer wa'n't in the room—which was a mercy—but your old messmate, Cateby-Stuart looked solemn as ever and never turned a hair.

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It struck us—I don't think any got away. I expected every minute to land in the hereafter, and it got so that the prospect looked kind of invitin', it only to git somewhere where 'twas warm. That February wind went in at the top of my stiff hat and whizzed out through

'round. I began to git shaky at the knees, as if I was preachin' to a big congregation.

After a spell Jonadab, not bein' able to think of anything more to say, and rememberin' Phil's orders, leans over and whoops into the trumpet.

"I'm real glad your son done so well with his laundry," he says.

Well, sir, Phil had give us to understand that them congratulations would make a hit, and they done it. The women 'round the room turned red and some of 'em covered their mouths with their handkerchiefs. The men looked glad and set up and took notice. Ebenezer wa'n't in the room—which was a mercy—but your old messmate, Cateby-Stuart looked solemn as ever and never turned a hair.

And upon honor they've all been alike. Now that I've discovered somethin' positively original, let me enjoy myself. The entertainment by the Heavenly Twins is only begun."

know a boat when I sighted one, but a fatiron on skates was somethin' brand-new. I didn't think much of it, and I could see that Jonadab didn't either.

But in about three shakes of a lamb's tail I was read to take it all back and say I never said it. I done enough prayin' in the next ha' hour to square up for every Friday night meetin' I'd missed sence I was a boy. Phil got sail on to her, and we moved out kind of slow.

"Now, then," says he, "we'll take a little jaunt up the river. 'Course, this ain't like one of your Cape Cod cats, but still—"

And then I dug my finger nails into the deck and commenced: "Now I lay me." Talk about goin'! 'Twas "P-a-s-s-a-t!" and we was a mile from home. "Bu-z-z-z!" and we was jest gettin' ready to climb a bank; but 'fore she nosed the shore Phil would put the helm over, and we'd whirl round like a wind-mill, with me and Jonadab bitin' the plankin' and hangin' on for dear life, and my heart, that had been up in my mouth, knockin' the soles of my boots off. And Cap'n Cateby-Stuart would grin, and draw: "Course, this ain't like an Orham cat boat, but she does fairly well—er-fairly. Now, for instance, how does this strike you